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Google to Go

'Doubly lucky' patent application signals plan for predictive mobile search, and Google phone may follow, analyst says.

July 27, 2007

By [Ken Schachter](#)

Google is planning a "doubly lucky" version of search for mobile devices that will add location and time of day to predict what a user is seeking, according to a patent application cited by an analyst.

Speaking at an iBreakfast seminar in New York on Thursday and a follow-up interview on Friday, the analyst, Stephen Arnold of ArnoldIT, based in Harrod's Creek, Kentucky, said that Google's interest in extending its search domination to mobile devices also could prompt it to shop a prototype handset around to carriers.

"I think that's very likely what Google will have available in six to eight months," he said.

Google took another step into the mobile world on Friday by announcing it will offer mobile search and social-networking tools to subscribers on the new WiMax network Sprint Nextel is beginning to roll out. WiMax lets wireless users surf the Web at broadband speeds, like WiFi, but it can transmit a signal for miles instead of a few feet.

Google wants to create a predictive mobile search system for two reasons, Mr. Arnold said. Aside from providing a more accurate search for the user, such a system can reduce latency—that delay common in wireless communication—by queuing up answers in advance.

Google's patent application 20060230350, filed in October 2006, uses variations on the word "predict" more than 20 times.

The patent application says that a system could enable an "I'm Feeling Doubly Lucky" search, a reference to Google's current "I'm Feeling Lucky" system which lets a web surfer type a search phrase and go directly to the site deemed the most relevant. In "doubly lucky" mode, the system could help the user complete a word or phrase automatically, conduct a search, and direct the user to the top match.

Contributing to the system's likelihood of a good match would be knowledge of a user's location. For example, someone at work searching for "seal" might be seeking a specialized washer, while the same person at home might be seeking the soul singer.

Mr. Arnold said he had identified 17 telephony-related patents and patent applications by Google and another dozen with a tangential link.

"That means 11 to 12 percent of Google's innovation effort since 1999 is in telco," he said.

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"Somebody at Google cares about this telephony stuff."

Google downplayed the significance of the patent filings. "We file patent applications on a variety of ideas that our employees come up with," a Google representative said in an e-mail. "Some of those ideas later mature into real products or services, some don't. Prospective product announcements should not necessarily be inferred from our patent applications."

Mr. Arnold is a veteran analyst and consultant who has tracked Google for years. His research papers include "The Google Legacy," published in 2005, and the forthcoming "Google Version 2.0, the Calculating Predator."

A Bear Stearns analyst report to which he contributed notes that Google also is changing the game in traditional desktop search. The report cites a February 2007 patent application that indicates Google will augment its PageRank algorithm with a "Programmable Search Engine."

PSE will be a two-way system that lets webmasters give Google deeper access to their databases. For instance, the report says a car dealer might list his inventory instead of merely providing a phone number.

The system, which uses Extensible Markup Language, or XML, to let Google "read" the content, will let the search giant put content in categories and create links to other information in Google's massive database.

The system could pose a threat to rival search engine Yahoo, which will be hard pressed to make the investment required to keep up, according to the report.

The system, invisible to searchers, also would cut down on "spoofed results" by spammers and search-engine optimizers, whose world will be turned upside down.

"The entire search-engine optimization structure will change," Mr. Arnold said at the iBreakfast event.

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